

STATE OF PRESS FREEDOM

Somalia
2021

→ Silencing Journalists Through
Targeted Attacks, Restrictions
& Censorship amid Precarious
Working Conditions





This Annual Report is the third one produced by the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) since it was founded in 2019. The report documents state of press freedom and violations against journalists in Somalia. For any queries about SJS activities, please contact us at sjs@sjsyndicate.org, or visit our website: <https://sjsyndicate.org/>. Follow us on Twitter @SJS_Somalia or like us on Facebook @sjsyndicate

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ABOUT SJS

Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) is an independent journalists' trade union established in May 2019 to defend the rights of the journalists, represent its member journalists and promote press freedom in Somalia.

SJS provides legal aid to journalists whose journalism work results in court cases and in need of legal defense through professional lawyers. Our goal is to be the true voice of the endangered Somali journalists and address their growing needs by building their professional capacity through trainings, seminars or workshops, with the aim to strengthen the skills and the capacity of the journalists to produce quality journalism.

SJS is a member of the Congress of African Journalists (CAJ) and the global Alliance of Civil Society organizations (CIVICUS).

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[Somali Journalists Syndicate – SJS](https://www.youtube.com/Somali_Journalists_Syndicate_-_SJS)



sjsyndicate.org

SUMMARY

Somali journalists were once again subjected to violence and deliberate attacks by the security forces of the federal government, regional states and the militant group al-Shabaab. Covering insecurity, the continued deadlock in federal elections and the reports concerning allegations of human rights violations, power abuse and corruption within the government are key red line for media professionals in Somalia. Journalists seeking to cover these issues often face arbitrary detention, death threat, harassment and intimidation and many are forced to self-censor themselves. As the country is still in a critical transition period as of the end of 2021, the problems have increased even more.

Journalists are taking increased risks throughout Somalia including Somaliland. Various forms of violence against journalists have increased significantly during 2021: from physical attacks to intimidation and harassment, targeted cyberbullying, we now see a number of tactics used to silence critical voices and freedom of speech. Together with the prevailing culture of impunity for perpetrators of crimes against journalists, this is one of the most serious challenges facing media freedom in Somalia. Sadly, self-censorship or quitting the profession has now become the only survival option for journalists in Somalia.

Two journalists were murdered in the country in 2021 and three others sustained serious injuries – two of them with gunshots. **65 journalists were arbitrarily detained** and **seven media houses raided**. Majority of these violations were perpetrated by state security forces such as the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), Turkish-trained Haramcad Police, security officers of the regional states of Puntland, Galmudug, South West and HirShabelle. Attacks on free press rose up in **Somaliland where 12 journalists were arbitrarily arrested** over the course of the year. Al-Shabaab has taken credit of the death of two journalists in Galkayo and Mogadishu, while government security forces shot and wounded two journalists on duty.

Threats and attacks from government officials, private individuals and al-Shabaab are almost a daily occurrence. Somalia still maintains its unenviable title of being among the most dangerous countries to practice journalism globally. For the seventh year in a row, Somalia has maintained the ignominious world title for impunity¹ towards crimes against journalists as journalists' killers roam free.

Journalists' access to information is extremely limited across the country. In 2021, while the impact of Covid19 continues to plague the Somali community, journalists found it difficult to obtain information about the government's response on the pandemic and the vaccine. The denial of journalists' access to information by federal and state health authorities, in violation of national and international legal obligations, thwarted public efforts to save lives and to reduce the spread of misinformation and fake news hindering vaccine uptake in the country.

Local media editors, reporters and producers revealed how the Federal Ministry of Health enforced secrecy to limit criticism of poor decision-making or hide corruption allegations as the pandemic took hold in all corners of the country. In many instances, both federal and regional states have deliberately blocked, detained, harassed and threatened journalists covering elections – especially during disputes and complaints related to Upper House and Lower House election.

¹ <https://cpj.org/reports/2020/10/global-impunity-index-journalist-murders/>

Throughout the year, the federal police in Mogadishu denied journalists access to information relating to the disappearance of Ikran Tahlil Farah², an intelligence employee who went missing late June 2021, and to information concerning the young Somali recruits allegedly transferred to Eritrean training camps as numerous public protests demanding information about their whereabouts were repeatedly dispersed.

Precarious working conditions, low wages, lack of employment contracts and lack of occupational health and safety continue to affect Somali media workers. Since the start of the epidemic in the country, media workers have been particularly vulnerable and many journalists have been infected with the infection, although no deaths have been reported. Somalia does not have a statutory minimum wage and a new federal labor law, which could spell out labor rights and conditions of employment, is still in draft.

Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) calls on the federal and regional states of Somalia to respect the right to freedom of the press as outlined in the Provisional Federal Constitution. Protecting journalists and media freedom is an important pillar in cherishing information as a public good.

Free press plays a vital role in informing citizens about public affairs and monitoring the actions of government at all levels. When journalists are threatened, attacked, detained and their media houses raided that means citizens will not have the right to raise key issues affecting state-building and rule of law, which are important for Somalia's governance.

SJS further reminds Somali federal and regional authorities about their obligations to ensure that thorough and objective investigations are made of all cases of journalist killings, including the murder of the cameraman Abdirizak Kasim Iman³ who was shot dead by a police officer in July 2018 in Mogadishu.

The report presented here is based on interviews with local journalists, media directors, family members of affected journalists, civil society representatives and government officials. It covers violations against the journalists and the freedom of the press including threats, harassment, arrests, censorship, physical attacks and killings of journalists in Somalia including Somaliland that took place from 1 January to 31 December, 2021.



Abdalle Ahmed Mumin
Secretary General
Somali Journalists Syndicate



10th January, 2022

² <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somali-premier-suspends-intelligence-chief-president-objects-2021-09-06/>

³ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/07/26/unresolved-three-years-on-police-officer-who-killed-cameraman-abdirizak-qasim-iman-is-not-yet-apprehended/>

Murdered



Independent journalist, Jamal Farah Adan shot dead in Galkayo in the evening of 01 March 2021. | PHOTO/ Courtesy/FB.



Radio Mogadishu director and journalist, Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled (popularly known as Abdiiaziz Africa) killed by a suicide bomber in Mogadishu, on Saturday 20 November, 2021. | PHOTO Courtesy/Radio Mogadishu.

On 1 March 2021, Gunmen shot dead⁴ independent journalist, Jamal Farah Adan in the Puntland-controlled north district of Galkayo. The perpetrators fled the scene as per police reports while Al-Shabaab had claimed the responsibility of the killing. However, a promise by Puntland authorities to investigate and apprehend the perpetrators was not implemented even though media reports⁵ of suspects' arrests. On 7 March, 2021, Puntland president, Sa'id Abdullahi Deni spoke on the death of journalist Adan and said that Puntland police apprehended people suspected to have involved in the killing of the journalist "and that an ongoing investigation was close to an end". Security sources said they held four to five suspects but never revealed when, how and where they were arrested⁶.

On 20 November 2021: A suicide bomber killed⁷ state-owned Radio Mogadishu journalist and director, Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled (popularly known as Abdiiaziz Africa) and the injuries of two other colleagues in Mogadishu. Abdiiaziz and colleagues were leaving a local restaurant where they had a dinner that night. Abdiiaziz had died while the director of the state-owned Somali National TV, Sharma'arke Mohamed Warsame and their driver Abdukadir Dhagahow were injured⁸. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility of the attack and said that they had been hunting Abdiiaziz for a long time. However, colleagues said it was not clear how the suicide bomber identified the journalists' vehicle and got knowledge of their movement.

⁴ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/03/01/independent-journalist-shot-dead-in-galkayo/>

⁵ <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/puntland/puntland-oo-dad-u-xirtay-dilkii-wariye-jamaal-aadan-faarax>

⁶ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/11/02/idei-2021-end-of-violence-against-somali-journalists-sjs-and-soma-call-somali-authorities/>

⁷ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/11/21/state-media-director-killed-others-injured-by-a-suicide-bomber-in-mogadishu/>

⁸ <https://radiomogadishu.so/allaha-u-naxariisto-agaasime-afrika-oo-u-geeriyooday-dhaawac-ka-soo-gaaray-garax-lala-egtay/>

Injured in the Line of Duty

On 20 March 2021: Somali police officer shot and injured Goobjoog cameraman Sharma'arke Abdinur Wehliye as he was heading home from work when a police officer fired one bullet at him penetrating his stomach before fracturing his left forearm, according to a family member and Goobjoog management who spoke to SJS. Wehliye was admitted at a private hospital where doctors performed an emergency surgery on his stomach and made a blood transfusion. He continues to receive medication at the time of writing.



Goobjoog Media Group cameraman, Sharma'arke Abdinur Wehliye who was shot and injured by a police officer in Mogadishu on Saturday 20 March, 2021. | PHOTO/SJS.

On 24 March 2021: Radio Gedo journalist Abdirizak Sheikh Ismail sustained a serious pelvic injury after a gunshot fired by Somali police officer hit him during an event where government officials received opposition officials⁹ and soldiers on the outskirts of Beledhawo tow, Gedo region. Abdirizak's injuries was transferred to Mogadishu and neither the officer who him was arrested nor the motive of the incident was investigated, according to the journalist's family members.

On 24 June 2021: Four unidentified men ambushed¹⁰ SJS Secretary of Trainings, Mr. Hanad Ali Guled, who is also the editor of Goobjoog Media¹¹, while on his way to home from work. The attackers severely beat Mr. Hanad before hitting their knives twice on his upper arm and the back neck causing severe bleeding. He was rushed to the hospital as the attackers fled the scene immediately. SJS Secretary General, Abdalle Mumin described the attack and beating as an attack on all SJS members. Despite calls for police to investigate this attack immediately and arrest the perpetrators no action was taken as of end year.



Hanad Ali Guled, SJS Secretary of Trainings attacked by unidentified people in Mogadishu on Wednesday 23 June, 2020. | Photo/SJS.

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/sntvnews/posts/4084695481591213>

¹⁰ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/06/24/sjs-condemns-overnight-attack-and-knife-injury-on-its-training-secretary-calls-for-prompt-investigations/>

¹¹ <https://goobjoog.com/weriye-hanad-cali-guuleed-oo-lagu-dhaawacay-muqdisho/>

Arbitrary Detentions and Arrests

On 2 January 2021: About 10 armed South West police officers entered the premises of Radio Barawe, a local community radio in the coastal town of Barawe¹² and detained journalist Osman Aweys Bahar following a news report¹³ broadcasted by the radio on 30 December 2020, which featured complaints of local elders, youth and women about the marginalization of Barawe residents in both government services and development projects. He was released four days later without charges.



(From top left to the bottom right) journalists Husein Ateye Gaafane (Universal TV); Abdillahi Dahir Waeys (SAAB TV); Ahmed Diriye Iltire (SBC TV) and Shu'eyb Mohamed Kahin (Bulsho TV) were arrested in Borame on 16 January 2021. | PHOTO/Combined/SJS.

On 16 January 2021: Somaliland police in Borame detained four journalists¹⁴ (Husein Ateye Gaafane, Universal TV; Abdillahi Dahir Waeys, SAAB TV; Ahmed Diriye Iltire, SBC TV; and Shu'eyb Mohamed Kahin, Bulsho TV) after reporting unannounced trip by the Mayor of Borame City, Saleban Hassan Hadi amid an ongoing audit investigation on the Borame City Council, according to the journalists. They were not charged and were all freed without condition on 20 January.

On 20 January 2021: Galmudug police arrested two journalists¹⁵ (Mohamed Abdiwali Tohow Universal TV and Radio Kulmiye and Abdullahi Warsame Roble SNTV) in Dhusamareb. The arrest was ordered by Galmudug State Presidential officials due to the journalists' recent reporting on al-Shabaab attacks in Galgaduud region including area near Dhusamareb, the seat of Galmudug State. The journalists were held at the Dhusamareb police station and

both were freed on 21 January without charges¹⁶.

On 20 January 2021: Security guards of the Vice President of Hirshabelle State, Yusuf Ahmed Hagar raided the premises of Radio Hiiraan Weyn in Beledweyne and detained¹⁷ journalist Omar Muhidiin Omar¹⁸ over allegation that he created a Facebook Page used to criticize the Hirshabelle State Vice President, and allegation that the journalist refused. He was held at the Beledweyne police station for 24 hours. On 21 January the journalist was arraigned at Hiiraan Regional Court without a lawyer. The court then freed him due to insufficient evidences to charge him on the same day.

¹² <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/01/05/south-west-state-police-raid-radio-barawe-and-detain-its-journalist/>

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/107247783994714/videos/804776820388374>

¹⁴ Ibid <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/01/24/sjs-condemns-recent-multiple-journalists-arrests-across-somalia-raid-on-a-radio-station-and-verbal-threats-from-regional-state-leaders/>

¹⁵ <https://radiokulmiye.net/2021/01/21/ciidamada-ammaanka-oo-xalay-xiray-weriyaal-ka-howgala-dhuusamareeb/>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/Tooxoow1/posts/493940291994230>

¹⁷ <https://radiohalgan.com/deg-deg-wariye-cumar-muxudiin-cmar-oo-ka-mid-ah-wariyayaasha-ka-howgala-magalada-beledweyne-ayaa-lagu-xiray-beledweyne-ee-xaruunta-gobolka-hiiraan/>

¹⁸ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/01/24/sjs-condemns-recent-multiple-journalists-arrests-across-somalia-raid-on-a-radio-station-and-verbal-threats-from-regional-state-leaders/>

On 29 January 2021: Mohamed Bashir Osman (Xilif) who is the founder of Sooyaal Online¹⁹ Television was arrested by the police in Abudwak town in Galgadud region of Galmudug State. He was accused for reporting a case of a raped and murdered female in Abduwaq in which the elders of both clans agreed to pay Dia but the mother who was interviewed by the journalist protested the claim of the elders of the two clans and demanded the rapists to be brought before the court of law. The journalist was freed late on the same day of his arrest without charge²⁰.

On 31 January 2021: Officers at the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) detained²¹ freelance online journalist, Nune Ali Hassan, and held him in unknown location in Mogadishu. The journalist was covering the Al Shabaab attack²² on Hotel Afrik in Waberi district in Mogadishu that afternoon when he was detained. The journalist was released on 01 February 2021, without being informed the reason he was arrested and kept in an unknow custody controlled by NISA. He was not charged.

On 3 February 2021: Galmudug police arrested a journalist Sadaq Said Nur²³ in Wisil town, Mudug region. The journalist travelled from Galkayo to a village near Wisil town to cover elders complaining about a new administration appointed by the Galmudug to their village. Police in Wisil forced the journalist to delete all what he filmed from the elders in the village in order to facilitate his release and the journalist agreed to fulfil their order and deleted to trade for his freedom. The journalist was released in the same day and was not charged.



SBC TV journalist Yusuf Mohamud Yusuf pictured after he was assaulted by Bari Governor in Bosaso on 4 February 2021. | Photo/ Courtesy/ SJS.

On 4 February 2021: Police officers attached to Puntland's Governor of Bari region, Abdisamad Yusuf Abwan, briefly detained Journalist Yusuf Mohamud Yusuf working for SBC Television and Radio in Bossaso, who also free-lances for the Voice of America radio at in the Southern police checkpoint of Bossaso town²⁴. The Governor also physically assaulted the journalist by hitting a stick and ordering his guards to beat him. The journalist was reportedly accused by the Governor that his previous events were not covered by the journalist in his media/online social media pages²⁵. The Journalist was released in the same day without t charge²⁶.

¹⁹ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=750049465933269&id=204196037185284

²⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

²¹ ²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/HalbeegMedia/posts/2755575591371707>

<https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

²² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/31/somalias-al-shabab-rebels-attack-hotel-in-the-capital-city>

²³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/wariye.maxamuud/videos/3609487075801728>

²⁵ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

²⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/sbcsomalitv/posts/3616182091799732>

On 8 February 2021: NISA officers briefly detained two Somali Cable TV staff members (cameraman Sayid Ali Abdi and driver Ali Malaq)²⁷ who were preparing to leave for an assignment. NISA officers detained the pair after a raid on the TV headquarters in Mogadishu's Bondhere district in that evening. They were held at Godka Jila'ow for an hour on allegation that they were secretly filming the notorious NISA detention facility, which is adjacent to the TV station. They were freed without charges and no further explanation was given. This was the second raid by NISA on Somali Cable TV since May 2020²⁸.



Somali journalists run for shelter after armed police dispersed protestors in Mogadishu on 17 December, 2020. | PHOTO/SJS/Private.

On 11 February 2021: Officers from the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) briefly detained Anadolu News Agency camera journalist,²⁹ in Hodan Police Station in Mogadishu. Sadaq was carrying out an interview on public views on the impact of COVID-19 in Mogadishu. The NISA officers who reportedly assumed that the journalist was collecting the public opinion on the political stalemate and elections took the journalist to Hodan District Police Station and searched his camera and released the journalist after they checked his camera on the issue.

On 18 February 2021: Somali federal government's Haramcad police briefly arrested three journalists: Mohamed Ibrahim bulbul Universal TV who is also SJS Human Rights and Information secretary, Mahad Hassan Abdi, and Zakariye Ahmed Muse both from Sadaq Mohamed Mohamud Shabelle TV)³⁰. The three journalists were on duty to report the development of police deployment ahead of the following day's promised opposition rally in the capital. They were held in KM4 area in Hodan district for three hours before they were freed and were not charged.

On 19 February 2021: Haramcad police unit detained four journalists (Farhan Mohamed Hussein, Radio Kulmiye; Fu'ad Mohamed Mohamud, Radio Risaala; Mohamed Yahye Jinow, free-lancer; and Abdinasir Yusuf Socdal, free-lancer) while covering an opposition protest near Daljirka Dahson Square in Mogadishu, where opposition presidential candidates planned to hold an anti-government rally³¹. The police took the four reporters to Shangani police station where they were held and were freed later in the day without charges.

On 22 February 2021: Puntland police in Bosaso arrested freelance online journalist Ahmed Botan Arab³² who reports on social media. His arrest followed after he posted video interviews on his Facebook page showing some residents of Bosaso commenting on a speech by the Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni had made the previous day. The speech touched on political developments in the region and the ongoing stalemate on the implementation of an electoral agreement between Somalia's regional and federal leaders. He was first taken to outside of the Bosaso on a police truck and was later

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/saleemaan.xaajaxmed/posts/5037532586318979> s

²⁸ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/02/20/with-impunity-somali-police-detain-confiscate-equipment-and-intimidate-journalists-at-gunpoint-in-mogadishu/>

³¹ Ibid

³² <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/03/27/sjs-alarmed-by-the-increased-attacks-on-journalists-across-somalia/>

transferred to a detention inside the Presidential Palace in Bosaso, and on late on the afternoon of 22 February he was taken to the Bosaso Central Police Station where he was detained. He was freed on 24 February and was not charged.

On 25 February 2021: Puntland police in Garowe detained Abdifatah Abdullahi Farah (known as Jiib) who is the editor of Somali Television Network³³. The police from Criminal Investigation Department visited the TV office in Garowe and detained him in connection with his coverage of a news story³⁴ that contained some residents of Garowe town commenting on a speech by the Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni had made the previous day. He was detained³⁵ and interrogated for several hours at Garowe central police station and later released on the same day without charge only after he had agreed not to publish reports critical of the Puntland government and its leaders.

On 4 March 2021: Somali police detained the Nation FM radio journalist, Mohamed Yahye Jiinow in Mogadishu's Hamar Jajab district after the district police chief ordered his detention. Jिनow was arrested a day after interviewing³⁶ a man who complained that his son was eaten by an alleged cannibal in Mogadishu. The journalist was held at Hamar Jajab police station for four hours before he was released later that day without charges³⁷.

On 9 April 2021: Galmudug police in Adado detained radio Adado journalist, Hashim Omar Hassan, after he reported a police gunshot³⁸ which resulted the death of a young goalkeeper during a football game between Adado and Beledweyne teams in Adado, Galmudug on 9 April. The journalist, who also reports for Five Somali TV, was held at the Adado police station until the next day (10 April) when he was freed without charge but was told to keep off reporting about police related incidents.

On 13 April 2021: Somaliland police in Hargeisa detained³⁹ veteran journalist Adan Abdi Idle over publication of "photos and an article" alleging Somaliland Central Bank Governor, Ali Ibrahim Baqdadi, of corruption. According to a Facebook video he recorded, journalist Idle said that the Governor of Somaliland Central Bank has ordered his arrest. Idle appeared before the Marodi Jeh Regional Court twice on 19 and 26 April⁴⁰. On 26 April 2021, after finding no evidence for the allegations brought by the Bank Governor, the court released journalist Idle on 28 April 2021⁴¹.

On 16 April 2021: U.S-trained Somali special force Danab raided⁴² independent Radio Deegaan in Galkayo south in Galmudug and detained⁴³ journalist Mohamed Omar Yusuf. The special also confiscated a laptop computer and a voice recorder as the forces raided the radio station and residential houses⁴⁴ midnight. According to the radio director and local journalists, Yusuf was held at undisclosed location and was not allowed to contact his family and lawyer. Also, the reason of the raid and the journalist's detention was not explained. He was freed without charge after 20 days in the military cell.

³³ <https://www.keydmedia.net/news/puntland-oo-lagu-eeedeeyay-caburinta-saxaafadda>

³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/cabdifitax.cabdullahi.3/videos/2833568263547741>

³⁵ <https://www.keydmedia.net/news/puntland-oo-lagu-eeedeeyay-caburinta-saxaafadda>

³⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/mohamedyahye.jinow/posts/159885669307892>

³⁷ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/03/27/sjs-alarmed-by-the-increased-attacks-on-journalists-across-somalia/>

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/702491020195940/posts/1174484796329891/>

³⁹

https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2021/Apr/182304/veteran_somaliland_journalist_adan_idle_arrested_by_police.aspx

⁴⁰ https://twitter.com/sjs_Somalia/status/1387421017866375169

⁴¹ <https://www.hornfacts.com/somaliland-journalist-held-for-reporting-govt-corruption-is-now-freed/>

⁴² <https://www.facebook.com/Xasan.fantastik/posts/3726648450766291>

⁴³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/04/26/journalists-arbitrary-detained-harassed-in-mogadishu-galmudug-and-somaliland/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/mudug12>

On 21 April 2021: Galmudug police forces detained independent journalist, Ali Said Mohamed⁴⁵ who reports for Facebook news page⁴⁶ which covers Galmudug region following a news report alleging the Galkayo police of soliciting bribes from detainees at the police station. Ali told SJS that after interrogations and harassment he was freed on the afternoon of 22 April without charges.

On 23 April 2021: Somaliland police in Borama detained freelance journalist, Abdiqadir Mohamed Ishqi⁴⁷. Local journalists told SJS that police entered Ishqi's residence on the early hours of Friday 23 April after he posted a video, he recorded from a critic imam called Sheikh Hassan Diheye who calls for greater Somalia⁴⁸. While the journalist was detained, however police did not arrest the imam. Local authorities did not provide additional explanation.

On 25 April 2021: NISA's Dufan force [the storm] detained beat and shot at Radio Hubal journalist, Bashir Ali Shire⁴⁹ who was live-reporting a violent protest and a gunfight in Karan district in Mogadishu. One armed officer snatched the journalist's phone and started kicking him and beat with the gun until another officer with a balaclava arrived and shot one bullet towards the journalist which luckily did not hurt the journalist. According to Bashir, he was taken to interrogation about his journalism and questions included his clan identity before he was released without charge.

On 2 May 2021: South West police officers in Afgoye detained⁵⁰ Dalsan TV journalist, Ibrahim Mohamed Mayow, a day after he covered displaced families who complained about diversion of food aid⁵¹ intended to the displaced families. He was freed when his TV station agreed to delete the story as a pre-condition for his release⁵². However, authorities continued to harass and block the journalist from accessing government events.

On 11 June 2021: Officers from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) accompanied by police officers entered⁵³ Star FM radio studio in Guriel town, Galmudug State and detained⁵⁴ its journalist, Ubeyd Hassan Mohamud, following his radio report⁵⁵ on the unsuccessful efforts to end inter-clan conflict in the region. According to Ubeyd, he was held at a private house owned by the commander of NISA in Guriel for four days. He was freed on Monday 14 June without charges. Upon his release, Ubeyd told SJS that he did not eat during the days in detention due to severe breathing complications resulting from pre-existing health conditions.

⁴⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/Xasan.fantastik/posts/3726648450766291>

⁴⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/mudug12/posts/938972563584327>

⁴⁷ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2966021290302194&id=2259409277630069

⁴⁸ <https://hornobserver.com/articles/863/Somaliland-journalist-held-for-reporting-an-alleged-corruption-is-now-freed>

⁴⁹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/04/26/journalists-arbitrary-detained-harassed-in-mogadishu-galmudug-and-somaliland/>

⁵⁰ <https://hornobserver.com/articles/883/Local-journalist-briefly-detained-for-reporting-alleged-aid-mismanagement>

⁵¹ <https://www.facebook.com/105098077553125/videos/169724995038203>

⁵² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/06/14/journalist-detained-in-galmudug-others-threatened-and-intimidated-in-mogadishu-and-south-west/>

⁵³ <https://www.facebook.com/starfmsoomaaliya/posts/3960544254060575>

⁵⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/06/14/journalist-detained-in-galmudug-others-threatened-and-intimidated-in-mogadishu-and-south-west/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/WariyeJakaarta/videos/241602743973611>

On 1 July 2021: Armed police detained⁵⁶ three Bandhiga Radio journalists and two interns in Hamar Jajab neighborhood, Mogadishu. While the interns were immediately released, the three journalists: Ibrahim Abshir Hassan, Ilyas Daud and Ibrahim Sheikh Hussein were held at the Hamar Jajab police station until later in the evening. Upon their release, they told SJS that the police officers who raided⁵⁷ their radio station were looking for the radio management following the landlord's complaints about a dispute related to the tenant's agreement. Although they were all acquitted without charge, it was not clear why the three journalists were detained and taken to the police station.



*Star Media Network journalist, Mohamud Mohamed Sheikh (Lafagari).
| PHOTO SJS/ Courtesy Mohamud Lafagari.*

On 3 July 2021: Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) officers in Beledhawo, Gedo region detained⁵⁸ journalist Mohamud Mohamed Sheikh (Lafagari), who reports for Star Media Network, a radio and television station based in Nairobi, Kenya for criticizing⁵⁹ the Somali Federal government's administration in Gedo. According to two family members interviewed by SJS, officers informed Mohamud that he had been arrested on the orders of Beledhawo District Commissioner, Abdifatah Arog and NISA Commander in Gedo, Bakal Koke. On the afternoon of Sunday, 4 July, Mohamud was secretly transferred to another prison in Dolow district, on the Somali-Ethiopian border where he was held for

five days and was freed on 7 July without charge.

On 4 July 2021: Hirshabelle police briefly detained⁶⁰ RTN television reporter, Hussein Abdi Jimale, in Beledweyne and held him in a police cell for four hours following his interview⁶¹ with local youth members who opposed and condemned the leadership of the State of Hirshabelle. According to Hussein and two other colleagues interviewed by SJS, the officers acted on the orders of Governor of Hiiraan, Ali Osman Jeyte. Hussein has been released⁶² without charge on the same day but told SJS that threats and intimidation against him continues after his release.

On 5 July 2021: Somaliland police officers in Las'Anod detained⁶³ freelance journalist Barkhad Mohamed Bashe after covering a protest by a local women group who complained⁶⁴ that their sons were arrested by the police in Las'Anod and transferred to Borame prison for wearing the Somali flag

⁵⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/07/06/police-and-nisa-detain-and-harass-journalists-in-mogadishu-gedo-hirshabelle-and-lasanod/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/bandhigamedia/videos/807122583324350>

⁵⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/07/06/police-and-nisa-detain-and-harass-journalists-in-mogadishu-gedo-hirshabelle-and-lasanod/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/MaxamuudLafagari>

⁶⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/07/06/police-and-nisa-detain-and-harass-journalists-in-mogadishu-gedo-hirshabelle-and-lasanod/>

⁶¹ <https://www.facebook.com/DiiniAbdiJimale/posts/266331038627392>

⁶² <https://www.facebook.com/mhdaacad/posts/189996006465372>

⁶³ <https://www.facebook.com/nuuriyemedia/posts/370439991165390>

⁶⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/100273264848732/videos/535963114432108>

outfit, while celebrating the 26th June which marks Somaliland's Independence Day. Barkhad and another journalist who visited him in police custody told SJS that he was released⁶⁵ on Tuesday 6 July on the condition of not reporting any news critical to Somaliland. He was not charged.

On 22 August, 2021: Somali Police in Mogadishu's Hodan district briefly detained⁶⁶ three journalists – SomNews TV reporter Salad Mohamed Kheyre and cameraman Abdifatah Mohamed Roble and Samiir Abdirisak Omar of Hanti TV – while covering a protest⁶⁷ at KM4 area in Mogadishu against the African Union Mission of Somalia (AMISOM) for killing civilians in Lower Shabelle region. Several other journalists also fled the scene after the police chased them. The trio journalists who spoke with SJS said that the police confiscated their equipment including cellphones, detained them in a Hodan Police station, where they were kept for an hour and half and were later released without charges.

On 2 September 2021: Somaliland police officers detained⁶⁸ Mowlid Ismail Digid, who reports for the Facebook news page Halbeeg Media⁶⁹ and held at the Lasanod police station before he was freed later in that day without charge. The journalist was taking photos as police conducted forceful evictions⁷⁰ of non-locals targeting ethnic southern Somali persons living in Lasanod city. The operation saw hundreds including women, children and elderly persons forcibly evicted from their homes and businesses in Lasanod, a city controlled by Somaliland and transferred to Puntland.

On 5 September 2021: Armed police officers from Hodan and Waberi districts in Mogadishu briefly detained⁷¹ Goobjoog Media producer, Bashir Mohamud, while live-streaming the protest, resulting him to sustain bruises on various parts of his body. According to Director of Goobjoog Media, Hassan Mohamed Mohamud, Bashir was held at Hodan police station and was later released without charge. Police also attacked 12 other journalists from the local and international news agencies, who were at KM4 junction, in Mogadishu, to cover protesters demanding justice for missing National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) employee, Ikraan Tahlil Farah⁷².

On 28 September 2021: Galmudig police in Dhusamareb detained⁷³ freelance journalist, Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow following his 15 September reporting⁷⁴ that revealed⁷⁵ the Dhusamareb police commissioner who had surrendered a machine-gun mounted vehicle and weapons to Ahlusuna militia resulting the commissioner's suspension⁷⁶ on 16 September. Tohow was released without charge on 3 October 2021, on a condition that he would report to the police once officers summon him as a regular way of intimidation.

⁶⁵ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/07/06/police-and-nisa-detain-and-harass-journalists-in-mogadishu-gedo-hirshabelle-and-lasanod/>

⁶⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/08/22/somali-police-briefly-arrest-3-journos-obstruct-and-chase-journalists-covering-a-protest-in-mogadishu/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLTATOM0fqE>

⁶⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/10/04/somaliland-police-detain-a-journalist-covering-forceful-evictions-in-lasanod-threatens-others/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/Halbeegsool/>

⁷⁰ https://www.hiiraan.com/news/2021/Oct/wararka_maanta3-178971.htm?utm_source=hiiraan&utm_medium=WararkaMaantaFront

⁷¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/05/sjs-and-soma-condemn-police-assault-confiscation-of-journalists-equipment-in-mogadishu/>

⁷² <https://www.voanews.com/africa/al-shabab-denies-killing-somali-security-agency-employee>

⁷³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/30/dhusamareb-police-arbitrary-detains-a-journalist-while-police-in-garowe-summons-freelance-reporter/>

⁷⁴ <https://mudug24.com/ciidamada-galmudug-oo-dhuusamareeb-ku-xiray-weriye/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/Wariyetooxow/posts/154807706828934>

⁷⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/Wariyetooxow/posts/155175290125509>

On 3 October 2021: Galmudug police in Galkayo briefly detained freelance journalist, Mohamed Abduqadir Sa'id, who reports for the privately-owned local Radio Hayan and was among a group of local journalists recently trained by SJS with the support of Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. According to Mohamed, his arrest came after Galkayo South (Galmudug) police chief, Qasim Sheikhdon called the journalist over the phone and ordered him to report to the police station where Mohamed was detained upon reaching.

His detention came after he covered a group of Sufi followers who announced⁷⁷ their support for the resurgence of the Ahlusuna militia group in Galmudug. Mohamed was freed later that day without charge but was instructed not to report issues regarding Ahlusuna militia in the region.



Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi (left), Abdikhadar Farah Abshir (centre) and Hamze Abdirahman Ahmed (right) detained in Lasanod town. | PHOTO/Combined/SJS.

On 4 October 2021: Galmudug police officers in Adado town detained Radio Adado and Five TV freelancer, Hashim Omar Hassan following his report⁷⁸ that covered a meeting by members of the Sufi followers who supported the renewed resurgence of the Ahlusuna militia in Galmudug.

He was held at the Adado police station. According to Sharma'arke Suley, the director of Radio Adado, the journalist was freed hours later after his director agreed to bring him back once the police summons him. There are no charges brought against him.

On 20 October 2021: Four police officers from Mogadishu's Shibis police station raided Radio Hiigsi studio, harassed journalists on duty and detained⁷⁹ its director Hussein Ahmed Tifow.

According to Tifow, the officers claimed that they were waiting for "payment" from the owner of the building but after failing to locate the owner, they entered the radio station. Tifow was held at the police station for three hours as his phones were confiscated. He was freed without charge.

⁷⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/OGAALTV1/videos/1971560302993976/>

⁷⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/HaashimOmarHassan/videos/289380206335992/>

⁷⁹ <https://sisyndicate.org/2021/10/26/journalists-arrested-in-lasanod-and-mogadishu/>

SJS Officials Harassed and Detained in Hirshabelle



Journalists, among them those from minority community in Jowhar, pose for a group photo following the conclusion of a three-day safety training supported by Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) in Jowhar on Friday, 22 October, 2021 | PHOTO/SJS.

On 21 October 2021 – Hirshabelle police officers who were acting under the orders of Interior Minister Mohamed Ali Adle and Police Chief, Hassan Dhi'isow raided a hotel in Jowhar city where journalists' safety training was ongoing and took out SJS Secretary General, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin and Secretary of Training, Hanad Ali Guled and held at the Interior Ministry building in the southern part of Jowhar town. The raid followed after SJS officials refused a bribery solicitation by Hirshabelle police officers who also asked about identities of journalists taking part in the SJS training. While Mr. Guled was freed after two hours, SJS Secretary General, Mr. Mumin was transferred at the Jowhar police station and was locked in the police station cell until late in the evening when he was released without charge. Armed officers later in the afternoon visited the hotel and harassed SJS Information and Human Rights Secretary, Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul by interrogating him about his journalistic work, while conducting the training in the hotel on the same day.

SJS expresses concern about the continued threats and intimidation against minority journalists in Hirshabelle. Since mid-September, SJS documented numerous incidents against journalists from the Bantu minority group covering abuses committed by state Hirshabelle state security forces and its officials.

Also journalists who report grievances regarding the distribution of parliamentary clan seats in Hirshabelle State were threatened, some of them denied to operate in the state's provisional capita, Jowhar. Known state officials are the main perpetrators of these violations.

SJS reminds Hirshabelle officials to explicitly recognise that violence against journalists and – particularly those from minority community – constitute a violation against international human rights standards and the rights preserved in the Somali Constitution. Any officer responsible for these threats should be held accountable.

On 24 October 2021: Somaliland police in Lasanod arrested⁸⁰ journalist Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi, who reports for Holhol Media, an online news media, following his coverage on a press conference⁸¹ by a group of the local clan elders who spoke against the women quota in their clan seat for the forthcoming elections of the Lower House of the Somali Federal Parliament⁸².

The journalist's mother, Asha Hussein told SJS that her son was transferred to Mandhera prison near Hargeisa alongside clan elders who gave the press conference. Abdifatah was freed after 35 days in jail without charge.

On 28 October 2021: South West State police led by Baidoa Airport police commander, Hussein Kerow detained⁸³ seven journalists from local media houses— Qasim Mohamed Ahmed Aadan, (HCTV reporter); Abdirashid Ahmed, (Shabelle TV); Hassan Ali Daud (Star TV); Mukhtar Sheikh Adan (Radio Warsan); Abdullahi Nur Adan (Radio Warsan/Saab TV); Farah Hussein Haji (Radio Warsan); and Mohamed Abdirahin (RTN TV) — who were at the airport gate to cover the arrival⁸⁴ of former South West State president, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, who is now a presidential candidate at the forthcoming elections of the Federal Government of Somalia. The journalists were held at the airport police station before they were transferred to the police headquarters in Baidoa. All were freed same day without charges.

On 28 October 2021: South West State police in Baidoa entered Radio Warsan⁸⁵ compound in Baidoa and detained⁸⁶ the radio's editor-in-chief, Mohamed Abdirahman Malele and its director, Hilal Sheikh Shueyb, who is also the chairman of the Somali Media Association (SOMA) after he condemned the arrest of seven journalists that day through an interview with BBC Somali radio⁸⁷.

Mr. Shueyb was threatened with arrest by South West State police chief, Amin Mad-Darur and the Baidoa District Police Commander, Mukhtar Ahmed Ibrahim (Dugudow). According to director Shueyb, he and editor Malele were forced to give apology to the police in exchange for their freedom⁸⁸.

On 28 October 2021: Galmudug police arbitrarily detained⁸⁹ freelance journalist, Mohamed Abdiweli Tohow, following his coverage on the deadly clashes in Guriel town between government forces and Ahlusuna militia. He was held at the Guriel police station for five days before he was freed without charges.

⁸⁰ [Ibid](#)

⁸¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Holholmedia/posts/4544129398982625>

⁸² <https://web.facebook.com/Holholmedia/videos/152559277087807>

⁸³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/10/31/south-west-briefly-detains-eight-journalists-in-baidoa-while-galmudug-incarcerates-a-freelance-reporter-in-guriel/>

⁸⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/dalsantv/videos/1035934317140267/>

⁸⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/RadioWarsanBaidao>

⁸⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/10/31/south-west-briefly-detains-eight-journalists-in-baidoa-while-galmudug-incarcerates-a-freelance-reporter-in-guriel/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/bbcnewssomali/videos/588486265535989/>

⁸⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/RadioWarsanBaidao/posts/404249231371058>

⁸⁹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/10/31/south-west-briefly-detains-eight-journalists-in-baidoa-while-galmudug-incarcerates-a-freelance-reporter-in-guriel/>

On 26 November 2021: Puntland police in Qardho detained⁹⁰ Qardho Media journalist and editor, Mohamud Abdirisak Osman and Guled Abdirisak Nur Kibonge, the director of a privately-owned radio Anfa in Qardho for airing and conducting interviews⁹¹ deemed critical to Puntland president, Said Abdullahi Deni's move to fire the director of Puntland Security Force (PSF) which sparked a security tension⁹² in Bosaso town.

Both Osman and Kibonge told SJS, upon their release, that they were initially held at the Qardho police station where police officers beat them with wooden sticks before they were transferred to the Qardho central prison on Saturday 27 November without charge. On Wednesday 01 December, police officers presented Osman and Kibonge to the Qardho District Court where only a judge, several police officers and clan elders were in attendance.

Both Osman and Kibonge told SJS, that without a lawyer representing them, they were forced to sign a document allegedly prohibiting them from reporting "any information critical to the state in the future". Both were freed without charge on Wednesday.

On 26 December 2021: Somaliland police in Lasanod detained⁹³ Holhol Media journalist, Abdifatah Mohamed Abdi who also reports for Saab TV after he posted a video clip⁹⁴ in which Lasanod residents appealed President Muse Bihi Abdi to fire the Governor of Sool region Abdikarin Adan Haji Diriye citing "mismanagement and sowing division among the community". According to colleagues and family members, the journalist's detention was ordered by Governor Diriye. He remains incarcerated⁹⁵ as of the end of the year.

On 30 December 2021: Somaliland police in Lasanod detained two journalists: Universal Somali TV reporter, Abdikhadar Farah Abshir and freelancer Hamze Abdirahman Ahmed following the orders of Governor Diriye.

The detention of the two reporters also follows after they reported interviews⁹⁶ featuring complaints by Lasanod elders and members of the community criticizing Governor of Sool region, Abdikarin Adan Haji Diriye, and demanding his removal. The two journalists remain incarcerated as of the end of the year⁹⁷.

⁹⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/12/02/sjs-condemns-recent-arbitrary-detentions-threats-against-journalists-safety-in-mogadishu-qardho-and-garbaharey/>

⁹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/106689628356109/videos/434607438248472>

⁹² <https://somaliguardian.com/news/somalia-news/somalias-puntland-state-deploys-more-troops-to-bosaso-to-quell-psf-mutiny/>

⁹³ <https://www.facebook.com/Holholmedia/posts/4763371757058387>

⁹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/lascanodak/videos/988896711664983/>

⁹⁵ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/12/31/sool-governor-orders-detention-of-three-journalists-in-lasanod-jubbaland-security-threatens-journalists-covering-election/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/khadar.rigaax.9/posts/962231874701809>

⁹⁷ Ibid

Beatings, Intimidation, Blockage and Other Threats against Journalists

On 13 January 2021: Somali police in Mogadishu had beaten Radio Simba journalist Mohamud Nur Mohamud (known as Bolbire) and ordered to stop recording video by the Somali police officers and threatened⁹⁸ with arrest as he had to report a bomb blast in Mogadishu's Bakaro market that day⁹⁹, according to the journalist and his editor. The armed police beat the journalist and ordered to stop video recording which he did. The journalist then left the site fearing for his safety.



Radio Kulmiye reporter, Fardowso Mohamud Sahal. (Photo /SJS Courtesy Fardowso Mohamud Sahal).

On 17 January 2021: while addressing newly trained police force in Qardho¹⁰⁰, the Puntland State President, Sa'id Abdullahi Deni warned critics including journalists reporting criticism on his administration through social media with legal action saying that "Puntland police will arrest those insulting government officials on Facebook and those using Facebook to incite the public or call for uprising and murder"¹⁰¹. The President further threatened that "police will impose criminal charges on them wherever they go or live".

On 19 January 2021: During a public address in Galkayo, Galmudug State President, Ahmed Abdi Kariye Qoorqoor threatened journalists and media houses¹⁰² with undefined consequences "for reporting and exaggerating¹⁰³ al-Shabaab attacks saying "those who exaggerate the menace caused by the terrorists are like the terrorists and we are at war with them".

On 4 February 2021: Puntland's Bari Governor, Abdisamad Yusuf Abwan physically assaulted and beat SBC TV and radio journalist, Yusuf Mohamud Yusuf with a stick while covering an event in Bossaso before briefly detaining¹⁰⁴ at the southern police checkpoint of Bossaso town¹⁰⁵. The journalist was reportedly accused by the Governor that his previous events were not covered by the journalist in his media/online social media pages¹⁰⁶. The Journalist was released in the same day without charge¹⁰⁷.

⁹⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/01/24/sjs-condemns-recent-multiple-journalists-arrests-across-somalia-raid-on-a-radio-station-and-verbal-threats-from-regional-state-leaders/>

⁹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/RadioSimba5/posts/2748118918837799>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/plstatehouseofficial/videos/735593187344697>

¹⁰¹ https://www.hiiraan.com/news/2021/Jan/wararka_maanta17-176355.htm?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium

¹⁰² <https://www.facebook.com/GalmudugSHouse/videos/407845533833831>

¹⁰³ <https://puntlandtimes.ca/2021/01/daawo-madaxweyne-qoorqoor-oo-u-hanjabey-dadka-taageera-alshabab-ee-ku-sugan-galkacyo/>

¹⁰⁴ <http://allsbc.com/maamulka-sbc-oo-ka-hadlay-xariga-wariye-yuusuf-maxamud-yuusuf/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/wariye.maxamuud/videos/3609487075801728>

¹⁰⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/sbcsomalitv/posts/3616182091799732>

On 6 and 8 February 2021: Eight journalists covering the Lower House of the Somali Federal Parliament for local and international media were harassed and intimidated¹⁰⁸ and their photos taken without consent by plain-clothed officers of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA)¹⁰⁹ at the Lower House (Parliament) building. Four of the eight affected journalists told SJS that at least three NISA officers with pistols approached them and threatened with unspecified consequences during interviews with opposition-affiliated Members of Parliament. They also said that they had noticed that the NISA men were taking photos of the journalists' faces with their mobile phones.

On 8 February 2021: Somali Cable TV freelance journalist Liban Abdulle Mohamed¹¹⁰ was assaulted and intimidated by the Chairman of the Middle Shabelle Chamber of Commerce who threatened to kill him. The Chairman was complaining against a report about a gunfight that resulted the death of a kat trader and injured another one near the Jowhar Airport aired on Somali Cable TV on 4 February. The journalists reported the case to the police in Jowhar but no action was taken as of the date of writing.

On 23 February 2021: Two Goobjoog journalists (news reporter Abdirahman Mohamed Abdi and cameraman Abdirisak Abdullah Fagas)¹¹¹ were stopped by NISA officers at Daljirka Dahson in Mogadishu where they were filming shortly after the Presidential Opposition Candidates announced to hold a protest scheduled for 26 February. The NISA officers confiscated the camera and deleted their footage. However, the two journalists were not arrested and were set free after the footage was deleted.

On 25 February 2021: Plain-clothed NISA officers intimidated and stopped two Goobjoog journalists (news reporter Isaq Hersi Maalin and cameraman Mohamed Abduqadir) during their assignment to collect vox pops about the election impasse from people on the streets at the Taleh junction in Hodan district. The NISA officers showed their pistols to the journalists and started insulting them by saying that 'Goobjoog is qaran dumis and that its journalists were thieves'. The NISA officers then forced interviewees who were ready to speak not to talk to Goobjoog journalists. The journalists left and were not arrested.

On 25 February 2021: Goobjoog TV cameraman Abdirisak Abdullah Fagas¹¹² was stopped at Km4 junction in Mogadishu, by two plain clothed NISA officers after he finished recording a video story. The NISA men asked Fagas where he came from and what he was doing as they thought that he was going for the opposition candidates. After the journalist told them that he was not on assignment that day they let him go without any action.

On 17 March 2021: Puntland military court sentenced freelance online journalist, Kilwe Adan Farah¹¹³, who was in jail since 27 December 2020, to three years in jail on spurious allegation and during what SJS and its lawyers described as a farcical kangaroo court trial that took place inside the Garowe Central Prison. Kilwe was freed on 22 March following Puntland president's decree¹¹⁴ to grant a special pardon ending 84 days behind bars.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.mustaqbalradio.net/suxufiyiinta-tebiya-fadhiyada-golaha-shacabka-oo-ka-cabanaya-dhallinyaro-dharcad-ah-oo-hanjabaad-ku-haysa-xilliga-ay-kujiraan-shagada/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/universalsomalitv/videos/465008441187343>

¹¹⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/03/27/sjs-alarmed-by-the-increased-attacks-on-journalists-across-somalia/>

¹¹³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/03/17/in-a-kangaroo-military-court-puntland-sentences-three-years-jail-term-on-journalist-kilwe/>

¹¹⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/03/22/after-84-days-in-jail-and-under-perpetual-judicial-harassment-journalist-kilwe-is-freed/>

On 24 April 2021: Somalia Federal Information Minister Osman, Abokor Dubbe, publicly harassed Universal TV journalist, Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul during a press conference at the Ministry of Information in Mogadishu. The minister, who seemed to be irritated by Bulbul's questions about election impasse-related violence had angrily called the journalist "a wedding videographer"¹¹⁵ while describing the journalist's questions as "irrelevant".

On 25 April 2021: Armed NISA officers stopped Universal TV reporters: Mohamed Ibrahim Bulbul and Khalid Maki¹¹⁶ at gunpoint as they were leaving the scene of violent protest in Karan district in Mogadishu¹¹⁷. The officers confiscated the journalists' camera and ordered to delete the footage they were recording. When the pair demanded explanation, the officers cocked their pistol and threatened to shoot forcing the two journalists to adhere to the officers' instruction and deleted their footage.

On 16 May 2021: Mogadishu's Hamar Weyne police Commissioner, Major Sharma'arke Hassan Mohamud accompanied by NISA officers beat¹¹⁸, harassed and confiscated of equipment of Radio Kulmiye female reporter, Fardowso Mohamud Sahal during a public protest¹¹⁹ at Daljirka Dahsoon (The unknown soldier monument) in Mogadishu. The armed police and NISA officers first attacked a group of journalists who were covering the protest¹²⁰ by parents of "allegedly missing" young men recruited by the Somali government and sent to Eritrea. Officers ordered journalists to stop their coverage and leave the area with immediate effect. Some of the journalists told SJS that they were threatened with arrests and confiscation of equipment by the officers should they not leave.

On 23 May 2021: South West State's Bay Regional Police Commissioner, Amin Mad-Darur summoned¹²¹ three journalists from local media: Abdirashid Mohamed Ibrahim, Qasim Mohamed Ahmed and Ali Mohamud Adan shortly after they left a press conference by local clan elders in South West who complained against the alleged 'unfair distribution' of positions for clans at the cabinet formation of the Jubbaland State. The police chief threatened the journalists with harsh consequences should they report about the news conference citing those elders lacked prior authorization from South West State authorities. None of the three journalists filed the news report out of fear for their safety.

On 10 June 2021: Somali federal police officers from Hodan District in Mogadishu and plain-clothed NISA officers cornered¹²² and intimidated a dozen of journalists from local and international media who were covering protest¹²³ by parents of allegedly "missing" Somali soldiers in Eritrea¹²⁴. According to the affected journalists, the officers then forced journalists to stop recording interviews with the parents who were complaining in front of the cameras in Mogadishu's KM4 intersection. At least four journalists took shelter within the crowd after the officers chased them in an attempt to confiscate equipment.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/rtnsoomaaliv/posts/905321903358798>

¹¹⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/04/26/journalists-arbitrary-detained-harassed-in-mogadishu-galmudug-and-somaliland/>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.hornfacts.com/protests-and-fierce-gunfight-rock-somali-capital/>

¹¹⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/05/16/police-and-nisa-officers-attack-journalists-beat-female-reporter-and-confiscate-equipment-in-mogadishu/>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/SOMALICABLE/posts/1476206602722136>

¹²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/nationfmradio/posts/145970530879756>

¹²¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/06/14/journalist-detained-in-galmudug-others-threatened-and-intimidated-in-mogadishu-and-south-west/>

¹²² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/06/14/journalist-detained-in-galmudug-others-threatened-and-intimidated-in-mogadishu-and-south-west/>

¹²³ <https://www.facebook.com/universalsomalitv/posts/4227981737260485>

¹²⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-eritrea-security-idUSKBN29X1F5>

On 5 September 2021: Armed police officers from Hodan and Waberi districts in Mogadishu attacked, beaten and dragged and briefly detained¹²⁵ Goobjoog Media producer, Bashir Mohamud, while live-streaming the protest, resulting him to sustain bruises on various parts of his body. According to Director of Goobjoog Media, Hassan Mohamed Mohamud, Bashir was held at Hodan police station and was later released without charge. Police also attacked 12 other journalists from the local and international news agencies, who were at KM4 junction, in Mogadishu, to cover protesters demanding justice for missing National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) employee, Ikraan Tahlil Farah¹²⁶.

On 15 September 2021: Somali military officers accompanied by local militia men in Abbay Dhahan area on the outskirts of Mogadishu, attacked¹²⁷ and beaten¹²⁸ two Goobjoog Media Group journalists – Mohamed Ahmed Roraye and Sharma’arke Abdinur Wehliye – who were on assignment to cover the burial of victims killed in a suicide explosion¹²⁹ in Mogadishu the day before. The officers and the unidentified gunmen stopped a vehicle in which journalists and others were travelling and singled out the journalists before attacking, beating and threatened to kill them.

On 18 September 2021: Hirshabelle State Parliament Speaker, Abdihakim Luqman Mohamed had publicly ordered¹³⁰ security forces to “switch off live TV coverage” during the Federal Parliament’s Upper House elections in Jowhar. The Speaker’s announcement, which was not implemented, came following a brawl¹³¹ inside the parliament that led to the suspension of the 18 September voting.

On 18 September 2021: Dalsan TV reporter, Mohamed Yasin Mahdi, who also covers for City FM, has been banned¹³² from reporting after he reported the scuffle¹³³ at the Hirshabelle Parliament Hall that resulted the postponement of Upper House election in Jowhar on September 18. Officials at the Hirshabelle presidency had informed the journalist that his TV was banned from Jowhar.

On 24 September 2021: Jubbaland authorities switched¹³⁴ off local telecommunication networks in Kismayo after a bomb blast¹³⁵ in Kismayo injured a government-allied youth leader and his son on 23 September. The mobile telecom companies and internet service providers were forced to switch off their networks from Thursday afternoon 23 September – Friday morning 24 September undermining safety and media access to information.

On 25 September 2021: Somali Police in Mogadishu and officers from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) blocked¹³⁶ journalists covering a suicide car bombing at a security checkpoint at

¹²⁵ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/05/sjs-and-soma-condemn-police-assault-confiscation-of-journalists-equipment-in-mogadishu/>

¹²⁶ <https://www.voanews.com/africa/al-shabab-denies-killing-somali-security-agency-employee>

¹²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/MohamedRoorayenews/posts/119481763774662>

¹²⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/28/on-iduai-2021-sjs-and-soma-call-for-media-journalists-access-to-information-amid-increased-pressure-against-media-freedom/>

¹²⁹ <https://www.voasomali.com/a/6225970.html>

¹³⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/dalsantv/videos/536858990953252/>

¹³¹ <https://www.jowhar.com/news/guddoonka-baarlamaanka-hirshabelle-oo-ka-hadlay-buuqii-xalay-ka-dhacay-doorashada-aqalka-sare.html>

¹³² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/11/18/sjs-and-soma-are-concerned-by-the-threats-and-intimidation-against-minority-journalists-covering-elections-in-hirshabelle/>

¹³³ <https://www.facebook.com/dalsantv/videos/536858990953252/>

¹³⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/28/on-iduai-2021-sjs-and-soma-call-for-media-journalists-access-to-information-amid-increased-pressure-against-media-freedom/>

¹³⁵

https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2021/Sept/184022/youth_leader_son_injured_after_home_targeted_with_ie_d.aspx

¹³⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/28/on-iduai-2021-sjs-and-soma-call-for-media-journalists-access-to-information-amid-increased-pressure-against-media-freedom/>

El-Gabta junction¹³⁷, Mogadishu. According to the affected journalists, security forces mounted a roadblock near the blast scene and refused journalists to film the blast site.

On 29 September 2021: Puntland police summoned and the subsequent interrogated freelance journalist¹³⁸, Mohamed Salah in Garowe for three hours about his reporting regarding the death of a female university graduate¹³⁹ who was shot dead by the security guards of Puntland president, Said Abdullahi Deni in Garowe on the night of 27 September.

On 8 November 2021: Hirshabelle police officers summoned and threatened¹⁴⁰ freelance TV journalist, Ali Taliye Abdi, with harsh consequences following his coverage of a press conference by the minority Shiidle clan elders who criticized¹⁴¹ Hirshabelle State president, Ali Gudlawe of intervention into the parliamentary seats allocated to the minority clans of Bantu. Another Mogadishu-based reporter has also received threatening calls after he covered a similar event¹⁴² by a group of Shiidle clan elders held in Mogadishu early November.

On 24 November 2021: Mogadishu's Hodan district police officers blocked and even used a live bullet against¹⁴³ a group of journalists from local media houses who were covering a suicide car bomb in Hodan district. The officers who were securing the site threatened to shoot journalists if they did not leave forcing reporters to leave instantly out of concern for their lives.

On 29 November 2021: Armed police officers led by Qardho police commander, Omar Hiraad Katun, raided¹⁴⁴ the home and the office of Habibo Ladan Abdi Ibrahim, a female journalist reporting for SBC TV for her coverage on the residents of Qardho commenting¹⁴⁵ on the security tension in Bosaso. According to Habibo Ladan, the officers were attempting to arrest her but after failing to find her, the police commander called her and threatened¹⁴⁶ with 'actions' over the phone.

On 30 November 2021: A domestic flight carrying journalists – many of them SJS members – was sprayed with bullets¹⁴⁷ from the ground as it nearly landed at Garbaharey Airport in Gedo region. Under the invitation of the United Nations, the journalists were travelling to cover the droughts-hit communities in the region. According to interviews with affected journalists and media reports, the flight, which also ferried humanitarian workers made an emergency landing back to Mogadishu. Garbaharey Airport is secured by Somali government forces.

¹³⁷ <https://hornobserver.com/articles/1333/Somalia-Seven-killed-in-Mogadishu-suicide-bomb-blast>

¹³⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/30/dhusamareb-police-arbitrary-detains-a-journalist-while-police-in-garowe-summons-freelance-reporter/>

¹³⁹

<https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2021/Sept/184064/president-deni-s-security-forces-shoots-dead-female-civilian.aspx>

¹⁴⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/11/18/sjs-and-soma-are-concerned-by-the-threats-and-intimidation-against-minority-journalists-covering-elections-in-hirshabelle/>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.facebook.com/shabelletv/videos/979045222647710>

¹⁴² <https://www.facebook.com/5SomaliTV/videos/620246489009003/>

¹⁴³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/12/02/sjs-condemns-recent-arbitrary-detentions-threats-against-journalists-safety-in-mogadishu-qardho-and-garbaharey/>

¹⁴⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/12/02/sjs-condemns-recent-arbitrary-detentions-threats-against-journalists-safety-in-mogadishu-qardho-and-garbaharey/>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/LadanXabiibo/videos/1789935051192104>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/496047350490095/posts/4666849700076485/>

¹⁴⁷ <https://hornobserver.com/articles/1477/A-local-flight-carrying-journalists-humanitarian-workers-makes-emergency-landing-in-Mogadishu-after-it-was-shot-at-Garbaharey-Airport>

Raid on Media Houses, Confiscation and Destruction of Equipment



COMBINED PHOTOS: Raid on Radio Mustaqbal Mogadishu on 27 April 2021. | Photo/ SJS/Private.

On 2 January 2021: Armed Somalia's South West police officers raided Radio Barawe, a local community radio in the coastal town of Barawe¹⁴⁸ and detained its journalist Osman Aweys Bahar following a news report¹⁴⁹ broadcasted by the radio on 30 December 2020, which featured complaints of local elders, youth and women about the marginalization of Barawe residents in both government services and development projects. The radio was off-air four days before it resumed its operations.

On 20 January 2021: Security guards of the Vice President of Hirshabelle State, Yusuf Ahmed Hagar raided privately-owned Radio Hiiraan Weyn in Beledweyne and detained¹⁵⁰ journalist Omar Muhidiin Omar¹⁵¹ over allegation that he created a Facebook Page used to criticize the Hirshabelle State Vice President, and allegation that the journalist refused. He was held at the Beledweyne police station for 24 hours before he was released.

On 8 February 2021: NISA officers raided Somali Cable TV studio in Mogadishu's Bondhere district and briefly detained two staff members (cameraman Sayid Ali Abdi and driver Ali Malaq)¹⁵² who were preparing to leave for an assignment. They were held at Godka Jila'ow for an hour on allegation that they were secretly filming the notorious NISA detention facility, which is adjacent to the TV station. They were freed without charges and no further explanation was given. This was the second raid by NISA on Somali Cable TV since May 2020¹⁵³.

¹⁴⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/01/05/south-west-state-police-raid-radio-barawe-and-detain-its-journalist/>

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/107247783994714/videos/804776820388374>

¹⁵⁰ <https://radiohalgan.com/deg-deg-wariye-cumar-muxudiin-cmar-oo-ka-mid-ah-wariyayaasha-ka-howlgala-magalada-beledweyne-ayaa-lagu-xiray-beledweyne-ee-xaruunta-gobolka-hiiraan/>

¹⁵¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/01/24/sjs-condemns-recent-multiple-journalists-arrests-across-somalia-raid-on-a-radio-station-and-verbal-threats-from-regional-state-leaders/>

¹⁵² <https://www.facebook.com/saleemaan.xaajiaxmed/posts/5037532586318979> s

¹⁵³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/02/11/sjs-condemns-recurring-violent-targeted-attacks-on-journalists-in-galmudug-puntland-hirshabelle-and-mogadishu/>

On 16 April 2021: U.S-trained Somali special force Danab raided¹⁵⁴ independent Radio Deegaan in Galkayo south in Galmudug and detained¹⁵⁵ journalist Mohamed Omar Yusuf. The special also confiscated a laptop computer and a voice recorder as the forces raided the radio station and residential houses¹⁵⁶ midnight. According to the radio director and local journalists, the equipment was returned after the journalist was freed 20 days later without charge.

On 27 April 2021: the Turkish-trained Somali police unit “Haramcad” violently raided the privately-owned radio Mustaqbal Media in Mogadishu¹⁵⁷. According to journalists and management of Mustaqbal Media, the armed officers entered the radio premises in K4 area at 6:00am and ordered the staff on duty to come down at gunpoint, where they beat and harassed radio editor Bashir Mohamud Yusuf before confiscating computers, laptops, phones and cameras. The radio programming was suspended due to the raid, however it resumed operations on the following morning. A Haramcad officer was later quoted¹⁵⁸ that the reason was due to Radio Mustaqbal’s editorial line to use the term describing the “expiration of President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo’s term in office”.

On 1 July 2021: Armed police raided¹⁵⁹ Bandhiga Radio in Hamar Jajab district of Mogadishu and detained five people in the radio: three journalists and two interns. While the interns were immediately released, the three journalists: Ibrahim Abshir Hassan, Ilyas Daud and Ibrahim Sheikh Hussein were held at the Hamar Jajab police station until later in the evening. The radio station went off as a result of the raid and the arrest of its journalists.

On 30 December 2021: Al-Shabaab fighters raided and destroyed¹⁶⁰ the studio of the privately-owned Radio Bal’ad in Bal’ad town, about 30km north of Mogadishu during an armed attack which resulted intense gun battle in the town¹⁶¹. Journalists and other staff fled the studio before the attack and were all unharmed.

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/Xasan.fantastik/posts/3726648450766291>

¹⁵⁵ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/04/26/journalists-arbitrary-detained-harassed-in-mogadishu-galmudug-and-somaliland/>

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/mudug12>

¹⁵⁷ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/04/27/turkish-trained-somali-police-raid-radio-mustaqbal-beat-its-journalist-and-confiscate-equipment/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/MustaqbalMedia/posts/3971059752983401>

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/bandhigamedia/videos/807122583324350>

¹⁶⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/12/31/sool-governor-orders-detention-of-three-journalists-in-lasanod-jubbaland-security-threatens-journalists-covering-election/>

¹⁶¹ <https://radiokulmiye.net/al-shabaab-oo-saakay-weerar-ku-qaaday-degmada-balcad/>

UN declares the Arrest and Detention of Journalist Mohamed Abuuja in Somalia is in Violation of International Law

On 19 July 2021 – The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) declared its opinion that the arrest and detention of journalist Mohamed Abdiwahab Nuur (“Abuuja”), who was held in detention in Mogadishu, as arbitrary and in violation of international law.

Abuuja, a human rights defender journalist and the editor for Radio Hiigsi, has published pieces critical of the government since 2016.

Throughout his work, he has bravely reported on abuses of power committed by the security forces, restrictions on freedom of expression, and the targeting of marginalized communities in the capital city of Mogadishu.



Journalist Mohamed Abdiwahab Nuur "Abuuja". | PHOTO/SJS

The National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) first detained him on 29 February, 2020, in retaliation for an editorial he published three days earlier criticizing Somali security forces for engaging in threats and intimidation against Somali citizens. During that detention, officers tortured him and threatened to kill him if he continued his reporting. He was released a few days later on the condition that he would not speak about his detention; however, Abuuja was vocal about his unlawful imprisonment and on March 7, 2020, NISA re-arrested him.

He was held incommunicado for 92 days before his lawyer was finally allowed to see him, and only officially charged on August 3, 2020 by a military court which ordered him to be released after nearly five months in detention. The UNWGAD issued an opinion despite his release as they are empowered to do through their mandate, due to the “extremely serious” nature of the case.

This victorious decision paves a way for our colleague journalist Abuuja to get justice and we call on Somalia’s federal authorities to commission a full and independent investigation of the circumstances leading to Abuuja’s detention and hold accountable those responsible.

SJS appreciates the solidarity and support from Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, international human rights barrister Mr. Michael Polak and human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and International Media Support (IMS) during Abuuja’s detention.

Censorship and Restrictions against Access to Information



Journalists cover protest by the parents of missing Somali soldiers in Eritrea. Protest took place in Mogadishu's K4 intersection on Thursday 10 June 2021. | PHOTO CREDIT/ SJS.

Access to information remains as a key challenge for journalists and media houses in Somalia. Article 32 of the Federal Provisional Constitution of Somalia guarantees the right of access to information and instructs that a dedicated law to be enacted for the enjoyment of this fundamental right. But so far, no access to information law was drafted, thus denying Somali citizens their right to information.

In 2021, while the impact of Covid19 continues to plague the Somali community, journalists found it difficult to obtain information¹⁶² about the government's response on the pandemic and the vaccine¹⁶³. The denial of journalists' access to information by federal and state health authorities, in violation of national and international legal obligations, thwarted public efforts to save lives¹⁶⁴ and to reduce the spread of misinformation and fake news hindering vaccine uptake in the country. Local media editors, reporters and producers and independent data journalists revealed how the Federal Ministry of Health enforced secrecy to limit criticism of poor decision-making or hide corruption allegations as the pandemic took hold in all corners of the country.

In many instances, both federal and regional states have deliberately blocked, detained, harassed and threatened journalists covering elections – especially during disputes and complaints related to Upper House and Lower House election. In November, Galmudug election officials denied local journalists to film the polling station in Dhusamareb in a bid to prevent allegations of malpractices regarding the delegate selection process. Between October and November, South West state security detained and threatened eight journalists covering opposition candidates in Baidoa while three reporters were summoned and warned by the police over reporting clan delegate complaints. Hirshabelle officials continue to block and target journalists from minority community for uncovering abuses committed by

¹⁶² <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/07/03/journalists-found-it-difficult-to-access-information-about-governments-response-to-covid19-and-vaccines-in-somalia/>

¹⁶³ <https://unsom.unmissions.org/arrival-and-rollout-covid-19-vaccines-somalia-0>

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.voasomali.com/a/5920850.html>

the state officials and revealing information related to election malpractice forcing journalists to either self-censor or flee to Mogadishu for safety. Jubbaland security personnel threatened journalists with harsh consequences for reporting complaints about the results of elections to the Lower House in Kismayo in December.

Throughout the year, the federal police in Mogadishu denied journalists access to information relating to the disappearance¹⁶⁵ of Ikran Tahlil Farah¹⁶⁶, a NISA agent who went missing late June 2021, and to information concerning the young Somali recruits allegedly transferred to Eritrean training camps as numerous public protests demanding information about their whereabouts were repeatedly dispersed¹⁶⁷.

While radio is the dominant channel for local Somali communities to access information, there no independent radio stations in Somaliland, with the government monopolizing the radio broadcasting service and prohibiting the establishment of private stations.

Women in the Media

Women journalists in Somalia are regular targets of online attacks, as they face a double safety burden: being attacked as a journalist and as a woman. SJS has noted that working in a male dominated newsrooms, cultural stigma and family restrictions, sexual harassment, unfavorable workplace environment, lack or limited training opportunities, insecurity and inflexible working hours are the main challenges¹⁶⁸ facing women reporters.

In extreme cases, attacks against women journalists lead to self-censorship or worse: women withdraw from the public sphere, leaving the male-dominated field of journalism with even fewer female voices¹⁶⁹. Unfortunately, many women choose not to talk about the specific challenges and dangers they face in connection with their job.

Women journalists played a major role in the development of the media industry and deserved equal opportunity under media leadership. Women reporters have been at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19¹⁷⁰. Not only are they have been reporting, but as mothers, they are raising awareness to their families and the public on how to stay safe during the pandemic. That's why Somalia needs women at every table where decisions are made. They deserve respect, not harassment.

SJS urges authorities in the government and media leaders to remove cultural and socio-economic barriers that prevent women journalists from achieving resources necessary for them to lead. In our news media, women journalists should not remain at the lowest paid staff as we have witnessed that many of whom are in highly vulnerable forms of employment.

¹⁶⁵ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/09/05/sjs-and-soma-condemn-police-assault-confiscation-of-journalists-equipment-in-mogadishu/>

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.voanews.com/africa/al-shabab-denies-killing-somali-security-agency-employee>

¹⁶⁷ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/05/16/police-and-nisa-officers-attack-journalists-beat-female-reporter-and-confiscate-equipment-in-mogadishu/>

¹⁶⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/03/08/on-international-womens-day-2021-sjs-calls-for-equal-opportunity-for-women-journalists-in-somalia/>

¹⁶⁹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2019/05/20/protection-and-safety-of-women-journalists-in-conflict-situations-somalia-2/>

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

Impunity in Somalia

Over the past four years, 12 journalists were killed¹⁷¹ in Somalia: three in 2017; four in 2018; two in 2019, two in 2020 and one in 2021, making the country one of the most dangerous places for journalists across the globe. For the sixth year in a row, the country has maintained the ignominious world title for impunity towards killed journalists.

In September 2020, Somalia's Attorney-General has announced a little-known about appointment of "a special prosecutor¹⁷²" for crimes against journalists and promised to open investigations of journalists killed in the country, which remains to be the highest in Africa. SJS investigations show that no single prosecution related to journalists' murderers took place since the appointment of this special prosecutor.

The murder of a young TV cameraman, Abdirizak Qasim Iman¹⁷³, who was shot dead by a Somali government police officer in Mogadishu on 26 July 2018, and the fact that the killer officer is still at large despite a court sentence, and is a clear indication how authorities in Somalia—whether in the federal level or in the regional states—are reluctant to carry out credible, proper and independent thorough investigations into the cases of killings or attacks on journalists and media outlets.

It also shows the level of impunity that exists in Somalia but also it is a grave reminder of the dangers facing media professionals.

¹⁷¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/07/26/unresolved-three-years-on-police-officer-who-killed-cameraman-abdirizak-qasim-iman-is-not-yet-apprehended/>

¹⁷² <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/somalia-moves-to-prosecute-crimes-against-journalists/1968032>

¹⁷³ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/07/26/unresolved-three-years-on-police-officer-who-killed-cameraman-abdirizak-qasim-iman-is-not-yet-apprehended/>

SJS ACHIEVEMENT 2021

4 Safety Trainings
Conducted in Four
Different Regions

A Network of 100
Human Rights
Journalists Trained
and Mentored

Over a Dozen of Legal
Defence Provided

More than 20 Advocacy
Campaigns Carried Out

4 Special Reports
Published

1 Annual Report Issued

Precarious Working Conditions Affect Somali Media Workers

Precarious working conditions, low wages, lack of employment contracts and lack of occupational health and safety continue to affect Somali media workers.

In 2021, SJS carried out its very first study¹⁷⁴ on the conditions of labor rights of Somali journalists. About 112 journalists surveyed across the country, explained how, like other professions, the Covid-19 pandemic is negatively impacting their earnings. Since the start of the epidemic in the country, media workers have been particularly vulnerable and many journalists have been infected with the infection, although no deaths have been reported. Employers have made redundancies and informed their media workers, including journalists, that they cannot pay, while others have been asked to work without pay as media houses face conditions while unstable economies resulting from restrictions and shrinking advertising market also caused another pressure.

Journalists working in regional states have poorer working conditions and receive lower salaries than those in the capital Mogadishu. Journalists in the capital have access to more than one job posting and media stations may receive advertising opportunities when all of these circumstances are limited in regional states. Women journalists reported specific challenges. They are the lowest paid media workers, even though they have years of experience. There are not many training possibilities specifically available for them.

Almost 86 percent of journalists surveyed said they had moved from one news outlet to another several times in the past 12 months to seek better pay and more rights. Journalists are not entitled to any type of insurance and do not receive compensation if they are injured or killed in the line of duty. Almost over half of the journalists interviewed said, low-paid and unpaid journalists experienced stressful conditions because they were unable to support their own households.

Somalia does not have a statutory minimum wage and a new federal labor law, which could spell out labor rights and conditions of employment, is still in draft¹⁷⁵. Through its trade union movement drive alongside local media employers¹⁷⁶, SJS is negotiating with major media stations across Somalia to enable a collective bargaining agreement for media workers to ensure journalists get proper employment contracts¹⁷⁷ and end precarious working conditions once and for all. Likewise, SJS also calls on the Somali Federal Ministry of Labor to speed up the labor bill and include minimum wage legislation to ensure the protection of Somali journalists and other media workers in Somalia.

Laws and Regulations Affecting Journalists and Media Freedom

The amended Somali media law, which the president approved in August 2020¹⁷⁸, poses a significant threat to media freedom and the work of the journalists in Somalia. This draconian law includes criminal penalties that are “vaguely worded and could give law enforcement authorities wide scope for misinterpretation and abuse. The requirements of accreditation and registration of journalists into a government database, handing the minister of information a significant power over the Media Council

¹⁷⁴ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/05/01/international-labour-day-sjs-survey-shows-precarious-working-conditions-for-somali-journalists/>

¹⁷⁵ <https://molgov.so/legislations/>

¹⁷⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/05/17/sjs-welcomes-entire-nation-fm-radio-journalists-as-new-members-and-begins-collective-bargaining-agreement-negotiation/>

¹⁷⁷ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/05/30/sjs-welcomes-16-risaala-media-corporation-journalists-as-new-members/>

¹⁷⁸ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2020/08/26/somalias-new-media-law-poses-threat-to-media-freedom-and-rights-of-journalists/>

and the criminalization of publications that contain government criticism are among key provisions with concern.

The Somali Penal Code, which was introduced in 1964¹⁷⁹ and as the country's current law, is also another obstacle to media freedom and the operation of the journalists. It is widely used in courts across Somalia including Somaliland to prosecute and silence journalists and government critics. Charges of criminal defamation, prohibiting of publication of false news, shaming and critiquing public officials, tarnishing state reputation are among articles frequently used against journalists throughout the country. Despite, the president recognizing the dangers of the Penal Code and promising its amendment in May 2020, no actions were taken as of end of 2021. Another worrying trend is the use of military court to prosecute journalists critical to the state¹⁸⁰.

Online Attacks Against Journalists

Facebook has become a platform for online attacks, death threats including threats of beheadings against journalists in Somalia and their families amid an increase of hate speech, incitement to violence and calls for murder targeted to media workers and critics, a 2021 report¹⁸¹ by Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) has found raising concern about the use of Facebook's Community Standard as an excuse to block and censor independent and critical reporting by Somali journalists and media houses.

SJS interviews with over 50 journalists and representatives from independent media outlets and content creators operating in Somalia, who described how they were censored and silenced by Facebook. Amid the mounting threats and out of fear some journalists have resorted to self-censorship. The perpetrators of these attacks include government employees¹⁸² and known officials, as per SJS investigations of more than 30 press freedom violation cases in the past six months. The Somali Federal Government also uses online trolling groups intended to manipulate social media, harass, intimidate and even threaten journalists¹⁸³ and critics of the government. Journalists' families were also targeted.

Unfortunately, no action has been taken by Facebook so far despite promising to react after complaints were raised. Journalists interviewed said Facebook did not respond to them when they flagged the threats on their live. Since mid-last year SJS has been in contact with Facebook's East Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa team.

With the absence of fact checking system in Somalia, the spread of disinformation and propaganda on social media have increased to unprecedented level since the eruption of the 2017 Gulf diplomatic crisis¹⁸⁴. Editors and journalists interviewed by SJS said the rise of "fake news" and the proliferation of doctored narratives that are spread by humans and bots online are challenging the local media houses. With more than 34 percent active users in Somalia, Facebook has become the main platform for this disinformation campaigns.

Unable to fact check everything online, the local media houses and journalists are now among the victims. The most recent example is the reporting of a premature obituary¹⁸⁵ of a popular female singer, who was still alive, by several media outlets last week causing painful moments for the singer's family and friends. Again, the source of this fake death was a Facebook page which is still active. Local media

¹⁷⁹ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4bc5906e2.html>

¹⁸⁰ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/03/17/in-a-kangaroo-military-court-puntland-sentences-three-years-jail-term-on-journalist-kilwe/>

¹⁸¹ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/05/03/wpfd-2021-facebook-disregards-safety-of-journalists-in-somalia-fails-to-tackle-disinformation-and-threats-on-press-freedom/>

¹⁸² <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/how-villa-somalia-sponsored-online-gangs-defeat-genuine-quest-for-justice>

¹⁸³ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR5214422020ENGLISH.PDF>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/5/qatar-blockade-five-things-to-know-about-the-gulf-crisis>

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.voasomali.com/a/5871137.html>

journalists and editors find it difficult to distinguish between truth and falsehood as Facebook has rapidly become the platform of choice for these groups.

Women journalists in Somalia are routinely subjected to sexual harassment and other threats for reporting politics and criticism of the government and issues related to the security causing many of the female reporters to refrain from taking up certain assignments for their own online safety. Al-Shabaab, the federal government and Somali regional states openly promote their content including propaganda information on Facebook¹⁸⁶. These campaigns include disinformation intended to discredit political opponents, drown out opposing views, or undermine trust in the critical news reporting by the journalists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) makes the following recommendations

TO THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT AND ITS FEDERAL MEMBER STATES:

The Somali Federal Government and its Member States should:

- Direct the police, particularly those from the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), to end intimidation, obstruction, threats, beatings, arbitrary arrests, harassment or prosecution of journalists and other media practitioners;
- Ensure that police and other relevant agencies thoroughly and effectively investigate all reported cases of attacks, threats, intimidation and harassment of journalists and ensure those suspected to be responsible are brought to justice in fair trials;
- Thoroughly and effectively investigate all reported cases of officials, regardless of rank or position, threatening or harassing journalists and discipline or prosecute those suspected to be responsible for these violations;
- Urgently review the provisions of the media law, the penal code, and all other laws that impede freedom of expression and media freedom and bring the laws in line with Somalia's constitution and international human rights obligations.
- Direct government officials and security forces to allow journalists and media workers to have access to government information including not putting impediments and restrictions on accessing government buildings and interviewing public officials;
- Condemn physical attacks, killings, threats, harassment, obstruction, intimidation and arbitrary arrests of journalists and other media workers;
- Publicly commit ahead of the elections to ensure that authorities and government institutions respect, protect, promote and fulfill the right to freedom of expression, and media freedom before, during and after the elections, including by providing a conducive and safe environment for journalists and other media practitioners to report on sensitive and public interest-related issues, such as security and election related information.

¹⁸⁶ <https://sjsyndicate.org/2021/05/03/wpfd-2021-facebook-disregards-safety-of-journalists-in-somalia-fails-to-tackle-disinformation-and-threats-on-press-freedom/>

TO THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS, MEDIA FREEDOM GROUPS AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES:

- Given the fact that civic space within Somalia is restricted, international human rights organizations and development agencies should:
- Support initiatives that promote freedom of expression in Somalia, as well as monitoring and highlighting rights abuses and violations, with a view of bringing to light these violations, including using the United Nations, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights and the African Commission Peer Review mechanisms to hold the government accountable;
- Support the local civil society groups, including media freedom advocates and journalists' unions to carry out systematic monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses of the right to freedom of expression and media freedom throughout the country;

TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The International Community should:

- Publicly speak out about the importance of freedom of expression and media freedom for Somalia's peace and state building processes and urge the Somali authorities to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of violations against the press and journalists;
- Urge the Somalia government to direct government officials not to harass or threaten journalists and other media practitioners;
- Urge the Somali government and its officials to respect, protect, promote and fulfill media freedom and the rights of journalists;
- Provide assistance to media freedom advocates and journalists' unions to build the capacity of the journalists so that they continue reporting on matters concerning freedom of expression and human rights;
- Support initiatives to reform laws and regulatory institutions to bring them into compliance with Somalia's international human rights obligations including the right to freedom of expression and provide technical support and assistance to such initiatives;
- Support efforts by the Somalia government to train police and other security personnel and court officials on human rights and freedom of expression and media freedom;
- Provide support actions that promote the safety of journalists in Somalia and put pressure on authorities to address the issue of impunity for abuses and attacks against journalists.

Acknowledgement

We at Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS) would like to thank our partners, members and supporters for standing with journalists and working alongside us to protect and uphold our vital freedoms. It is importantly clear that a solid journalism — which is free and courageous— that helps us to make informed decisions about our own lives is even needed more than ever in Somalia, in the region and in the world.

We could not accomplish our goals without the financial support and enthusiasm of our journalist members and our generous funders: National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).

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